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Behind the Shadows

SEN. STEPHEN YOUNG of Ohio may be correct in charging that the Central Intelligence Agency "has gradually taken on the character of an invisible government, answerable only to itself." Or he may be wrong when he says the agency, "wrapped in its cloak of secrecy," has, in effect, been making foreign policy.

The inability to decide whether the senator is right or wrong is in itself the strongest support for Mr. Young's proposal regarding the agency. He is asking for the establishment of a joint Senate-House committee to oversee CIA operations on a permanent basis.

Perhaps Mr. Young's proposal represents too great an intrusion on the executive department. A more acceptable plan may be that advanced by Sen. McCarthy of Minnesota. He would create a special Senate foreign relations committee to make a "full and complete study"

of the effects of CIA operations on U.S. diplomacy.

Such subcommittee scrutiny would have to be carried out with the utmost security and the panel's disclosures would have to be severely limited. But its findings could serve to put to rest fears that have grown up about the CIA in its shadowy 20 years.